

Claim Amendments

Please amend the claims as follow:

1. (currently amended) Process to remove solid slag particles from a mixture of solid slag particles and water present in a quench zone, which quench zone is part of a process for the preparation of synthesis gas by partial combustion of finely dispersed solid carbon-containing fuel with an oxygen-containing gas, by

(a) discharging the mixture from the quench zone to a first vessel defined by a height to diameter ratio and equipped with conduit means for removing water that is poor in slag particles,

(b) discharging slag particles from the first vessel to a second vessel by means of gravity, wherein the second vessel is located below and fluidly connected to said first vessel by means of an open connecting conduit and is further provided with closed means to discharge slag from a lower end of the second vessel,

(c) discharging water poor in slag particles from the second vessel via a conduit provided with pumping means and having an inlet located such that the water poor in slag particles is pumped from the second vessel,

(d) fluidly closing the first vessel from the second vessel,

(e) opening the means to discharge slag from the second vessel to remove slag from the second vessel to a lower pressure zone, and

(f) closing the means to discharge slag from the second vessel; ~~and repeating steps (a) to (f).~~

(g) discharging the mixture from the quench zone to the first vessel;

(h) discharging slag particles from the first vessel to the second vessel by means of gravity;

(i) discharging water poor in slag particles from the second vessel via the conduit provided with pumping means such that the water poor in slag particles is pumped from the second vessel;

(j) fluidly closing the first vessel from the second vessel;

(k) opening the means to discharge slag from the second vessel to remove slag from the second vessel to a lower pressure zone, and

(l) closing the means to discharge slag from the second vessel.

2. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the water poor in slag obtained in step (c) is supplied to the first vessel.

3. (original) Process according to claim 2, wherein the water poor in slag is supplied to the lower end of a first vessel, which first vessel has a height over diameter ratio of more than three.

4. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the water, which is poor in solids, is discharged from the upper part of the second vessel at a position way from the outlet opening of the first conduit entering the second vessel.

5. (previously presented) Process according to claim 4, wherein a tubular shield is present around the outlet opening of the first conduit directing the slag particles entering the second vessel downwards and away from the inlet of the conduit through which water poor in slag particles is pumped from said second vessel.

6. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the ratio of volume of water, which is extracted from the second vessel, relative to the volume of solid slag particles being transported to the second vessel in the same time period is between about 0.7 and 1.5.

7. (original) Process according to claim 6, wherein the ratio is between 0.8 and 1.

8. (previously presented) Process according to claim 6, wherein the volume of water extracted from the second vessel is equal to the volume of slag particles being transported to the second vessel.

9. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein fresh water is supplied to the second vessel during step (e) and/or (f) resulting in that the second vessel contains fresh water before step (b) is performed.

10. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein water poor in slag is discharged from the first vessel.